Points, badges, and news.
A study of the introduction of gamification into journalism practice

*Punts, xapes i notícies.
Un estudi sobre la introducció de la ludificació
a la pràctica periodística*

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ABSTRACT:
Several news media have started to introduce gamification techniques into their digital platforms as a new storytelling format for news consumption. Since habit strength is the most powerful predictor of news consumption, the goal is to not only engage news consumers, but also to provide a personalized news experience and to persuade users to foster the habit of consuming news regularly. However, there is a large research gap in the intersection of journalism and gamification. This article aims to discern how digital news media have introduced game mechanics into their online platforms, and the logic which it serves. This assessment is primarily based on four case studies of gamified news: *The Guardian*, *The Times of India*, Bleacher Report, and Al Jazeera. The results are ambivalent since the driving forces of the implementation process combine an attempt to engage users and a set of commercial motivations.

KEYWORDS:
journalism practice, gamification, commercialization, digital journalism, storytelling, news.

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RESUM:
Diversos mitjans de comunicació han començat a introduir tècniques de ludificació a les seves plataformes digitals com a nou format narratiu per al consum de notícies. Partint que l'hàbit és el predictor més rellevant de consum de notícies, l'objectiu és no només atraure els consumidors de notícies, sino també proveir una experiència de notícies personalitzades i crear un hàbit de consum regular de notícies. No obstant això, hi ha una gran manca de investigació sobre la intersecció del periodisme i la ludificació. Aquest article té com a objectiu investigar com les mecàniques de joc s'han introduït als mitjans de comunicació i a quina lògica responen. Aquesta avaluació es porta a terme principalment a través de quatre casos de notícies ludificades: *The Guardian*, *The Times of India*, Bleacher Report i Al-Jazeera. Els resultats apunten a aplicacions ambivalents, on les forces impulsores del procés d'implementació són una barreja d'un intent d'atraure els usuaris i una motivació comercial.

PARAULES CLAU:
periodisme, ludificació, comercialització, periodisme digital, *storytelling*, notícies.

1. Introduction

A multiplicity of multimodal communication channels are converging into single media that are changing social practices and, in some cases, substituting traditional situations and behaviors (Green, 2002; Carey and Elton, 2010), sparking new ritual forms, reliance on co-present understandings, and sometimes erosion of social cohesion (Ling, 2008). Traditional news organizations and other community-based information providers are trying to respond to audiences' interest with pervasive, portable, real-time local information (Purcell *et al.*, 2011), but competition for users' attention is fiercer than ever. The growth of media choices leads to a wider variety of content from which users may choose, according to their preferences (Hartmann, 2009). This suggests that the role of individual motivations becomes more important when deciding the media type to consume (Strömbäck, Djerf-Pierre and Shehata, 2012). As new technological advances such as mobile phones spread through society, video games have become a pervasive type of media consumption that has attracted the great majority of youth, sometimes displacing news consumption (Westlund, 2011). For this reason, several news platforms have started to gamify their web-based systems or mobile apps, with the aim of not only engaging news consumers but also of providing a personalized news experience and a sense of relatedness, while persuading users to create the habit of using the service regularly, translating it into a daily habit (Zichermann and Linder, 2013; Hamari, Koivisto and Pakkanen, 2014).

Traditional newspapers have a long history of incorporating games, among which quizzes and puzzles are the most popular (Foxman, 2015). The introduction of digital technologies has derived into two formats: newsgames (Bogost, Ferrari and Schweizer, 2010; Gómez García and Navarro Sierra, 2013) and gamified news (Ferrer Conill and Karlsson, 2015). The difference, as Sicart (2008) explains, is that newsgames are computer games used to participate in the public sphere with the intention of explaining or commenting on current news, while gamification does not attempt to create a full-fledged game but simply to apply game elements to digital interfaces that endeavor to merge both news and games in new storytelling formats using game mechanics as a defining feature. Since gamification has been successfully used in several fields (Deterding *et al.*, 2011*b*) with the aim to enhance engagement, grant choices, reaffirm progression, and provoke social habit (Werbach and Hunter, 2012), news media, in the attempt to appease the commercial urges of the industry, have started to experiment by introducing game mechanics into their digital services with the goal of attracting new users. However, applying game mechanics to journalism could also affect the professional logic of news media, as it could lead to a tabloidization of content, in favor of users' thoughts about and expectations of journalistic quality. After all, games carry the cultural traits of the context in which they are situated in order to transfer meaning to its players (Pérez Latorre, 2011).

And while examples of gamified news have started to be seen in the industry, there is a large research gap in the intersection of journalism and gamification. On the basis of this fact, this article aims to investigate how game mechanics is being incorporated into the digital editions of legacy newsmedia and the logic to which such game mechanics responds. In order to do so, this paper begins by discussing the tensions and frictions that arise from the process of gamifying news and journalistic content. The academic consensus is that the purpose of gamifying a service is contingent on the meaningful and playful approach that is given to such gamified initiative. Accordingly, this article goes on to analyze four case studies, focusing on the gears that move them while attempting to connect their meaning to the possible conflicting logics that drive gamification and journalism. Lastly, this study introduces a typology of gamified news that seeks to make sense of the disparate implementation of gamification within journalism.

2. The tensions of gamifying journalism

The communicative ethos of journalism is immersed in a constantly evolving process that is similarly affected by technological innovations, institutional and organizational dispositions, professional practices, and societal contexts (Schudson, 1997; Scannell, 1989; Ekström and Djerf-Pierre, 2013), shaping a common idea of what journalism is and of what it is supposed to be (Conboy, 2010). The democratization of news production, and the possibility of curating news, of contesting power with more sources and of reaching wider audiences give a glimpse of the re-inventing potential of digital journalism (Goode, 2009). However, the ideal values of journalism in terms of public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy and ethics (Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001) are problematic and contestable (Deuze, 2005). The ideal of public service, while still problematic, surfaces in the output of journalistic practice as a reminder of the value of journalism. There are several accounts of the civic and democratic properties of journalism (Bennett, 2012; Strömbäck, 2005; McNair, 2009; Merrill, 2011) as a facilitator to keep the public informed while engaging it in civic activities. As Costera Meijer (cited in Deuze, 2005) puts it, journalists should "inform citizens in a way that enables them to act as citizens".

However, the dynamics of the industry can only be understood through the current tensions between the professional logic and the commercial logic of journalism. The new wave of commercial dispositions and technological advances, based on computing, convergence, and digitalization, is an exponentially amplified account of similar historical instances based on printing culture, audiovisual culture, and broadcasting media, such as the telegraph, radio, or television (Schudson, 1978; Briggs and Burke, 2002; Bondebjerg, 2002). What Schudson calls the "democratic functionalism" of journalism (1997: 472), which is the idea that jour-

nalism exists simply because it serves and focuses exclusively on citizens' democratic needs, has been clearly contested since the beginning of commercial journalism. News media have the dual goal to serve and satisfy both citizens and the entrepreneurs owning the media. The economic constraints to which the news industry is subjected inevitably shape the output of news media as they react to pressures from stakeholders, advertisers, popular taste (Hartley, 2009), technological imperatives, and the fluctuating social expectations of what journalism is supposed to be (McManus, 1994).

These two logics are often diametrically opposed, as the professional aspects of journalism conflict with the commercial logic of the news media. In such an ecosystem, the introduction of new approaches, practices, or technologies, such as gamification, will be contingent on the tensions under which journalism operates (Ferrer Conill and Karlsson, 2015). This becomes particularly relevant when the new addition also functions with similar conflicts, and in this case gamification can only be understood by acknowledging the clash of logics that explain its existence.

Gamification, defined as the use of game elements and game design techniques in non-gaming contexts (Deterding *et al.*, 2011*a*), is also defined by a dual set of conflicting logics (Ferrer Conill, 2015). On the one hand, gamification has the underlying optimistic effect of redefining an activity by turning it into a playful and meaningful experience. This is what the proponents and champions of gamification advocate and what I call "the playful logic of gamification". On the other hand, gamification's ultimate allegiance is to the organization that gamifies the interface. It is that organization which is expected to gain from enhanced user engagement, client loyalty, or worker productivity. This would be the business logic of gamification. While it is acknowledged that the logics of gamification do not necessarily have to be opposing at all times, the advocacy and celebratory rhetoric of gamification (see McGonigal, 2011; Zichermann and Linder, 2013; Paharia, 2013; Herger, 2014) usually omits or downplays gamification's problematic approaches. However, several voices have started to offer a more critical look into gamification in terms of surveillance, playbor and control (Bogost, 2011; Rey, 2012; Whitson, 2013; Poltronieri, 2014; DeWinter and Kocurek, 2014). The underpinning proposal of this critical perspective is that the objectives of the creators of a gamified system do not always align with the needs of users.

When applied to news consumption, the use of gamification is also permeated by similar tensions as those between the commercial logic and the professional logic of journalism (Fuchs, 2014). The business logic of gamification is concerned about the economic outcome of gamification, and the goals that are embedded in the interests of the organization incorporating gamification. In journalistic terms, the business logic attempts to offer an attractive storytelling format that draws younger audiences, creating new habits and patterns of consumption while tracking and learning about the users' behaviors within the system. The playful logic focuses on the meaning and goals of the interface and system from the perspective

of the user, and on how the gamified layer affects human-computer interaction. When translated into the journalistic realm, the playful layer attempts to create a narrative that empowers and informs audiences by creating a user experience that engages users with news and expands their knowledge.

Consequently, it is within this framework that the gamification of journalism has to be understood. On the one hand, it attempts to serve business logic, both from journalism and gamification perspectives, seeking to increase the number of users, potentiate their news consumption, create a habit of news consumption, and drive new and stable forms of revenue. From this perspective it is the organization that benefits from gamifying the news, as it is the business processes that are reinforced, often with a lack of transparency as to how these objectives are transferred from the organization to the interface (Raftopoulos, 2014). On the other hand, the gamification of news attempts to engage users to read more news, to inform them, and, most importantly, to create an intrinsic motivation to consume news, making the act of reading the news a playful and enjoyable activity (Przybylski, Rigby and Ryan, 2010). In this case, journalism addresses the users as citizens focusing on their democratic needs and not on their desires, while at the same time catering to their motivational needs. In this sense, it is the users who benefit from gamification.

It is ultimately an analysis of the design and meaning of the gamified system that can bring to the fore the intentions and goals of gamification. A system without proper meaning, which only attempts to capture quick temporary engagement, usually envisions gamification from the business perspective, aiming for profit and not user experience enhancement (Nicholson, 2015). Furthermore, such an approach has a higher expectancy to fail than meaningful approaches (Deterding, 2014). However, a system that aims to playfully transform how news is consumed, could manage to satisfy both the business and professional logics. In the following section, four case studies are investigated in order to discern what the driving logics behind their design and implementation are. This is primarily done by analyzing the intended reach of the gamified system, the strategies used to create the narrative, the drivers that push the actual choice of game mechanics, the motivators that are to be triggered, and the outcomes of desired news use (Ferrer Conill, 2014). This approach intends to show whether the commercial or professional logic is more prominent in the gamified approach.

With this in mind, this article aims to provide an answer to the following research questions:

RQ1: How are digital news media incorporating gamification into their online platforms?

RQ2: To which logic of journalism and gamification do they respond?

By responding to these questions, this paper also aims to provide a framework to study the introduction of gamification into journalism by providing a case typology, as well as to help to fill the gap in a highly under-researched field.

3. Method and case profiles

There are several accounts of services that have been successfully gamified. Success here is a tricky concept. In the context of the industry, success ranges from user engagement metrics, brand loyalty, and market exposure to producing storytelling techniques that gather attention and brand building. However, gamification has an even more nuanced notion of success when applied to journalism practice since the conflicting logics of gamified journalism make for a difficult assessment of what success looks like. Alternatively, the meaning behind a gamified system can usually pinpoint the guiding logic behind a system (Nicholson, 2015). It could be argued that a purely business logic could lead to a shallow gamification (Lieberoth, 2015) that does not conform to the professional logics of journalism and, therefore, it could be deemed unsuccessful according to the democratic aspirations of journalism. For the purposes of this study, success is conceptualized as a gamified news story or news website that has been deployed and published.

Following a similar approach as Aitamurto's (2015) study on crowdsourcing journalism, this study's empirical data collection is based upon a multiple case study methodology, drawing its data from content and feature analyses of four case studies. In order to assess the guiding logic behind each initiative, an in-depth analysis of journalism is required. The following four case studies are analyzed within a framework that takes into consideration the reach, strategies, drivers, motivators, and outcomes of each case (Ferrer Conill, 2014). The measurements and criteria used to drive the analysis can be found in Table 1 and are identified by conducting a critical qualitative content analysis of each gamified interface.

As has been mentioned, the use of gamification in journalistic practice has steadily gained momentum. Due to a larger need for resources combined with a mostly experimental approach, the most prominent gamified examples are

Reach	Strategies	Drivers	Motivators	Outcomes
Article-specific	Dynamics	Empowerment	Relatedness	Civic engagement
System-wide	Mechanics	Accomplishment	Autonomy	Participation
Consumption	Components	Meaning	Competence	Knowledge
Production		Ownership	Belonging	News habit
		Scarcity	Recognition	Readership
		Avoidance	Power	Traffic
		Unpredictability		
		Social influence		

Table 1. Analysis criteria for gamified journalism

conducted by large actors in the global panorama of digital journalism. This is not to say that local digital outlets have not experimented with gamification but their impact has been admittedly smaller. The following cases have been chosen due to their particular characteristics. In first place, these are all internationally renowned outlets. Secondly, each case provides a different approach as regards implementation, from system-wide to single-article, as well as from a production perspective and on the basis of the storytelling format. Lastly, these cases have become some of the most important and renowned examples of gamified news. The scope remains international due to the uneven adoption of gamification. As an experimental approach, gamification has been incorporated by larger actors in digital journalism as an attempt to test game mechanics. In the context of Spain and Catalonia in particular, the attempt to incorporate game mechanics into news has been quite significant but it has remained confined to stand-alone newsgames or to the use of quizzes and other game-based functionalities aimed to attract users, such as the Catalan dialect test run by the newspaper *Ara* (Rodríguez Mariné, n.d.). These approaches, while playful, are not entirely within the gamification framework as understood in this article. Ultimately, the four cases discussed in this study represent the four different implementation types that are currently present in digital journalism, globally.

3.1. *The Guardian*

One of the first gamified ventures within journalistic boundaries is *The Guardian*'s investigative participatory journalism feature. In 2009, *The Daily Telegraph* acquired and published a set of leaked documents that would trigger a major political scandal anchored in the UK's parliamentary expenses and the misuse of allowances by Members of Parliament (MPs). *The Telegraph*'s approach was that of a traditional news organization, devoting a team of professional journalists over the span of a month to analyze and uncover a series of explosive stories. *The Guardian* took a different approach. It created a specific page where all the documents could be openly accessed by its readers. Each user had the possibility to flag each document as "Not interesting", "Interesting but known", "Interesting", and "Investigate this!". Additionally, a progress bar showing the amount of data covered was implemented, as well as a leaderboard that showed the top users and the number of items reviewed. The gamified crowdsourcing campaign had 20,000 readers review 170,000 items in the first 80 hours. The engagement of the users was driven by a combination of a community-shared goal, a clear sensation of progress, and a sense of status as they were mentioned in the leaderboards. Simon Willison, one of the developers who set up the system, acknowledges that in order to engage users who would be doing the work for free, they created a game-like experience that was intended to be fun (Andersen, 2009; Daniel and Flew, 2010). In further iterations of the system, they allowed users to focus on the documents that tackled their own MPs in order to make the experience more relevant to their personal context (McAlister, 2011). Needless to

say, this campaign did not require an extreme effort from *The Guardian* team and it did not use a wide array of game elements, but it succeeded brilliantly in harnessing the willpower of the users to carry out a joint investigative initiative that otherwise would not have been possible. The gamified layer had a clear goal, a simple set of instructions, and it involved all readers by showing the progress bar in the home page of the news website. It has become the poster child of how to successfully apply gamification to journalism, engaging the users and providing benefits for all involved.

3.2. *The Times of India*

The media conglomerate Times Internet Limited is India's largest Internet network as well as its largest media and entertainment group. In June 2012 one of the main news sites of the media group, *The Times of India*, launched a digital loyalty program called MyTimes Rewards that used a gamified layer. The program slowly grew in range and was eventually renamed to TimesPoints as it transcended *The Times of India*'s scope. This is a gamified system which is integrated across 12 different media sites that offer a wide and eclectic range of content, including traditional news, real estate, music streaming, female entertainment, male entertainment, and car deals. Times Internet offers both a site-specific leaderboard and a comprehensive leaderboard that combines all users across websites. The users get points for engaging in activities within the website, such as reading and sharing articles, writing comments, connecting their social media profiles, sharing photos, taking polls, and visiting the sites frequently. The ubiquitous badges are also present in the Times Points program and, not surprisingly, there are different sets of badges for each site. The badges awarded by this system can be upgraded, however, and the level of each badge can be lost, too, if the frequency of visits by users drops. The cumulative points earned for each activity are divided into five different thresholds, starting at bronze and ending in diamond. The points earned by each user, which expire in a 12-month period, can be redeemed for physical gifts. Similarly, a user can earn prizes by winning contests embedded in the social layer of Times Points. This social layer is cross-group too, and collects all the profiles of the group's users. On each user profile appear the global points accumulated, as well as all the badges that have been awarded on each website owned by the group. Finally, each website presents on its front page a rather intrusive Times Points widget that shows both site-specific and global leaderboards with the option to sieve through today's leaders, or the weekly, monthly, and yearly leaders.

3.3. Al Jazeera

One of the most impressive gamified features is Al Jazeera's *Pirate Fishing: An Interactive Investigation*, which was released in its digital edition in the fall of 2014. In this gamified news story the users are turned into players who create a storytelling interface in which the reader is prompted to consume multifarious types of

content, from text, video, and photos to different maps, documents, and audio clips. The content is connected in a way that the story requires several clues and user interaction in order to go farther into it. The users are required to watch the clips and to read stories in order to file them in the "reporter's notebook" and thus gain investigative points. An "Evidence" section allows the reader to collect proof of illegal activities; there is also a "Notes" section for all information relevant to the investigation, and a "Background" section provides context for the story. As users advance in the story, the cumulative points lead to the successive stages, where they are promoted, increasing their level from junior reporter to senior editor by interacting with the report on illegal fishing in Sierra Leone. Additionally, there is a map that unlocks other investigative content which will reward users with specialist badges such as "Activist" or "City explorer".

Thus, the interface here becomes a crucial node of interactivity where the news story is turned into a highly playful narrative, capturing the nuances of a hard news story without needing to reduce the quality of the reporting at any moment. The immersion is based on levels and progression, and also on content unlocking, all with the purpose of informing readers in a more engaging way. As with the case of *The Guardian*, this is a self-contained story that is not connected to a website-wide gamified system. The main difference lies in the fact that in Al Jazeera's case, gamification becomes a central storytelling technique in which the users are prompted to continue consuming a story that requires approximately two hours to complete. The game mechanics become part of the story and cannot be consumed if the user does not complete previous steps.

3.4. Bleacher Report

Bleacher Report (hereafter B/R) is an all-sports news website with a large pool of contributors ranging from professional sports journalists to passionate fans with a penchant for writing. In order to track their career progress relative to their peers, B/R set up the Writer Program based on gamified news production. The writers of the website are rewarded with various types of digital tokens: medals, achievements, badges, and points. Medals are awarded for one-time achievements according to the performance of single articles. On a seven-level scale from bronze to diamond, a writer can receive a medal for his number of reads (bronze means 1,000 reads, diamond means 100,000 reads), number of comments (25 comments for bronze, 500 for diamond), and number of lead stories (1 for bronze, 500 for diamond). On top of the medals, writers can earn badges for their performance in monthly top-writer competitions. Points attempt to reward a long-term engagement with the website. Different interactions with the system award different numbers of points, which are cumulative. The amount of points each author has defines the author's reputation level. There are a total of 18 reputation levels: from Contributor I at the bottom, to Chief Writer III at the top. A separate hierarchy is set for Featured Columnists. The authors are then placed in the Power Grid, which

is a leaderboard based on several different metrics, such as number of contributions, fans or reads.

B/R's gamified layer is rather simple and straightforward. It aims to tap into the authors' need for writing status, connecting it to the basic metrics that drive a news site. The visual tokens allow for easy comparison and evaluation of each contributor's progress and status within the organization. Furthermore, with this tool journalists can measure the real impact of their work. In an industry where freelance and commissioned work is extremely important, increasing status and harvesting a reputation can be particularly valuable. In short, B/R turns journalists into users by awarding them points according to their writing career statistics based on their contribution to the site.

4. Analysis and discussion: The four approaches to gamified news

These case studies provide room for discussion on the potential use of game mechanics within journalism. Gamification of news can potentially re-invent journalism, with an ambivalent set of results. On the one hand, a gamified news service has the potential to engage users to read news, to inform themselves, and, most importantly, to foster an intrinsic motivation to consume news while making a habit of it, as habit strength is the most powerful predictor of news consumption (Diddi and LaRose, 2006). Additionally, introducing game mechanics to news websites could very well become a profitable business model, by drawing in more readers and more often, making it a service much more attractive to advertisers. On the other hand, news outlets could use a gamified experience to exploit their users, either by manipulating their reading choices through game mechanics, or by only monetizing the content and data they generate while they interact with the system. This could become a serious privacy risk involved with tracking the users' every move and owning such data. It is at least ethically dubious (O'Donnell, 2014). Furthermore, it could turn the game mechanics and the interface into the central aspect, relegating news to a secondary role, or fostering picking of trivial news so that they fit the narratives shaping the gamified system. In a way, it all depends on the way gamification is applied to journalistic practice and what the logic is that ultimately motivates its implementation.

In the case of *The Guardian*, the attempt to invite the user into a crowdsourced investigative journalism initiative that was meant to hold politicians accountable for their expense excesses is a best-practice example of new forms of digital journalism: participatory journalism in design (Domingo *et al.*, 2008; Singer *et al.*, 2011) turned into a reconceptualized watchdog journalism (Hunter and Van Wassenhove, 2010). Thus, the journalistic logic behind this approach is the professional logic, in

which journalistic norms and values are dominant against the backdrop of commercial motivations. When it comes to gamification logic, while affordances attempt to empower users to participate, this is not done entirely through game mechanics, which are only limited to a progress bar and a leaderboard, but also through the invitation to users to become watchdogs themselves. The process of investigating content is not totally redefined, as it still is a tedious activity of physically reading digital documents. On the other hand, what was primed in this system was to have as many people as possible sieve through the documents in order to achieve immediacy (Domingo, 2006) at a minimal cost, as the users did the work for free. Thus the beneficiary of the gamified layer was not so much the user but *The Guardian* itself, which managed to go through a staggering number of documents thanks to the free labor of readers. Thus, when it comes to gamification logic, in this case business logic prevails.

The case of *The Times of India* offers a different picture. This attempt lies not so much in engaging its users with the content of its websites, but rather in engaging them with the platform and habitualizing their visits. A glimpse of this is shown by the fact that from the 10 badges that are specific to *The Times of India* news website, only one, the News King badge, is linked to the actual activity of reading news. The rest of the badges are connected to sharing content, engaging with other users, and keeping the social layer of the group active. The other website-specific set of badges follows a very similar pattern. The gears and mechanics behind this gamified system do not center their efforts on enhancing or playfully redefining news consumption. On the other hand, the majority of the rewards are centered on other activities that have little to do with news consumption and instead are concerned with increasing user interaction with the system by other means. Time-limited badges use a motivator based on loss aversion, which in this context is quite unnecessary. Thus, the commercial logic of journalism and the business logic of gamification are both predominant in this case.

Al Jazeera's case is probably the example of gamified news that, from the normative perspective, every news media organization should strive for, and the one that probably could become the "Snowfall" of gamified journalism (Dowling and Vogan, 2015). Similarly, from the perspective of gamification, Al Jazeera completely redefines the way in which digital news stories are presented, by producing a multimodal storytelling technique in which game-like stimuli are intended to engage the users to read and to get more deeply informed about the story. Interestingly, the logics behind this story shy away from strictly commercial or business logics (other perhaps than brand-building). The intent here is to experiment with a relevant hard news story through the crafting of a complicated and extensive interface that requires a larger pool of resources for a limited return on investment. Similarly, the gamification is all-immersive using an extensive playful repertoire of game design to inform and engage users. The return of users is not the goal but rather the game mechanics seeks to motivate users to complete the story from

beginning to end. Thus, this story conforms to both the professional logic of journalism and the playful logic of gamification.

Finally, the Bleacher Report case represents the final combination: commercial logic of journalism and playful logic of gamification. The former logic is present in the measures to reach prominent status as a journalist. These measures are output quantity and popularity, which could lead to reinforcing and prioritizing news items that are of popular interest rather than establishing journalistic parameters to filter stories. This approach is rather problematic and potentially dangerous for the values of journalism. The meaning behind B/R's Writer Program seems to push contributors to produce more and to compete with other contributors in pursuit of personal career status. The latter logic is present in an extensive quantified system that turns user competition and achievement into a writing game or contest. The main goal is status and progress, with several modes of visualization. While badges feel a little bit random, the point threshold mimics in a playful way the normative progression of a journalistic career. Incidentally, a more nuanced exploration of the game mechanics would also allow for a description of the system in the exploitative approaches, in which "winning" is the only state driving journalistic production, and where user empowerment is only moderately visible.

Each example discussed here represents a different approach in which the different logics interplay, stressing one or the other in different ways. Figure 1 is the
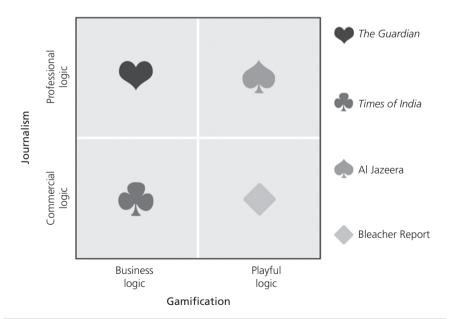

Figure 1. Case placement in the quadrants of conflicting logics between journalism and gamification

resulting matrix offering a visual representation of how each case relates to the combination of logics. The *x*-axis represents the gamification logics, from the business logic to the playful logic. The *y*-axis represents the conflicting logics of journalism, from the commercial logic to the professional logic. Thus, two quadrants represent corresponding logics (business x commercial and playful x professional) and the other two quadrants represent complementing logics (business x professional and playful x commercial). Each case is then placed in the quadrant corresponding to the logics identified in the analysis of the cases.

The first two approaches are those that have corresponding logics. On the one hand, there is *The Times of India*, with a focus on journalistic commercial logic and business logic of gamification. After analyzing *The Times of India*'s gamified system, it is clear that the design does not dramatically affect the user experience, and that the playful layer is limited to points, badges, and leaderboards, without an apparent reason beyond the gratuitous addition of game mechanics. Furthermore, the purpose of gamifying the system does not appear to serve any of the norms and values of journalism. Points and badges are awarded for several tasks, of which only one is directly linked to reading news. Hence, the goal seems to be primarily focused on increasing visits for monetization purposes, subjected to the commercial logic of journalism, rather than informing the public or nurturing a habit of reading news. On the other hand, we have the example of Al Jazeera, which resides in the quadrant of journalistic professional logic and playful logic of gamification. In this case, the Al Jazeera feature is immensely playful, with a clear redefinition of new storytelling technique. This requires an elevated degree of resources, with a relatively unclear monetary return. Thus, the goal here is to clearly engage the users in immersing themselves in the story in order to learn and enjoy the activity of consuming news as much as possible.

The other two cases are less clear-cut classifications. First, *The Guardian*'s feature is placed in the quadrant of professional logic of journalism but within the business logic of gamification. The reasoning behind this classification is that the interface has very limited playful affordances, summarized in choice: points, a leaderboard and a progress bar. The journalistic goal, on the other hand, attempts to invite the audience to a crowdsourcing investigative journalism initiative, in which the newspaper, spurred by the citizens, holds accountable Britain's MPs. Thus, the gamified expression is rather exploitative, as it involves the users in a free-labor endeavor, which frees *The Guardian* from large time and human resources. However, the motivation behind it resonates with the principles of journalism. Second, the case of the Bleacher Report is situated in the journalistic commercial logic and the playful gamification logic. While the game attempts to mimic the career progression of journalists through an intricate combination of metrics and titles that opts for competition and progress as main motivators, the reality is that it does not uphold the values of journalism, in which quality of content is the main goal, but relies on the quantification of journalism in order to press journalists to be more

productive, and it could lead to a focus on improving the metrics, disregarding the democratic aspirations that distinguish journalism from other informational practices.

5. Conclusions

While other industries have seen a much faster implementation, the introduction of gamification into news is happening slowly but steadily. The special characteristics of journalism have led to a cautionary approach to this new trend. This is even more apparent in legacy media. Digital-only news media, deprived from the organizational and cultural baggage of traditional newspapers, have been much more explorative and have experimented either with new forms of storytelling or with simple implementation of basic game mechanics.

Theoretically, the process of gamifying the news is meant to provide new value to the user, personalizing the news experience with relevant, targeted news, embedded in a social environment while keeping the quality of the news intact and always aiming for a broadening of views, avoiding selective exposure (Knobloch *et al.*, 2003), and emphasizing improvement of the users' knowledge. Ultimately, the goal is to generate a feeling of competence, autonomy, and relatedness to generate the intrinsic motivation of consuming news in the user through persuasive design and game mechanics (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Fogg, 2002; Przybylski, Rigby and Ryan, 2010). However, as it has been demonstrated during the analysis of the case studies, the current way of implementing gamification within journalism points to ambivalent results, where the driving forces of the implementation process are a mixture of often contradicting logics.

The typology presented in this study is not without certain limitations. The last two cases can be nuanced further. One could argue that since *The Guardian* pursued the gamified system in order to maximize resources and have a competitive edge against its competitors, then the logic behind the implementation is purely commercial. *The Guardian*'s feature is widely recognized as a success story as it successfully captured both commercial and professional logics of journalism by having a simple, meaningful goal. The aim was to engage the users to participate in investigative journalism while becoming active watchdogs of elected politicians. However, on a much more practical note, the gamified layer did not particularly create a playful arena that would intrinsically motivate users, other than a sense of status and perhaps watchdog reciprocity. Similarly, the B/R example could be contextualized as a business logic of gamification, since the playful system is embedded in working conditions, which makes the need to "play the game" a rather exploitative practice. Thus, some examples will be able to coexist with different logic configurations, depending on which aim is given precedence.

The cases seen in this article represent the four main approaches usually adopted to incorporate game mechanics in journalism according to the logics that rule both journalistic practice and gamification design. This leads to a rather open typology of gamified news; from systems in which the goals are purely economic or addressed to attracting new users, to creating features that playfully aim to redefine storytelling techniques in which the user interacts with the system to uphold journalistic values. The question remains as to whether gamification can reach the level in which it equally satisfies both the commercial and professional logics of journalism. This apparently contradicting scenario could be represented by a storytelling technique that drives traffic to the news website, creating new sources of revenue while addressing the professional norms and values of journalistic practice.

In future research, deeper explorations of a hybrid typology that appeases both commercial and professional logics of journalism, based on goals, affordances and outcomes, should be continued. Additionally, research that studies the effects of gamification on users would be very helpful to learn whether the apparent goals of organizations are translated into the experiences of users, and whether there is a measurable effect on their media use, in order to quantify the impact of gamifying journalism.

Notes

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